



# THE BURKETT FAMILY

A Quarterly Publication

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## Reunion – Goldthwaite, Texas September 9, 2000



It's hard to believe another year has come and gone and that Audy Majors and I have attended our third Texas reunion! I have said it before but I'll say it again — we go because we are made to feel as welcome as we do at the Reunion in Huntsville, Alabama among so many of our first cousins that we grew up with. But it's the same there in Texas — we don't get to spend enough time with each of them. However, we get to see the faces and the enjoyment expressed by those who attend. If you are skipping any reunion you have the opportunity to attend, I predict it is something you will regret later. To me, there is no better feeling than being among "kin folks" - even if it is for such a short time.

### **Wednesday September 6 -**

Audy and I left Huntsville early and again arrived Wednesday evening surprising Melissa Beck who manages the Redbud Inn in Goldthwaite because I had made the reservations beginning Thursday evening. (Melissa is the wife of Danny Beck who is a son of Berylene Goodwin Beck and Don Beck; a grandson of Mae Delle Burkett Goodwin; and a great grandson of Joseph Lafayette Burkett.) This time we took a different route from Huntsville out to Goldthwaite — and it turned out to be a faster and easier route. We headed south from Huntsville toward Birmingham and then over to Meridian and Jackson, Mississippi; through Shreveport and on toward Dallas. This eliminated the rough roads of Arkansas and we had less traffic than going through Memphis and Little Rock.

### **Thursday September 7 -**

Thursday morning we went over to have breakfast at Oliver's as has been our routine on each trip. On the way out, we had discussed what we wanted to do and we continued this discussion during breakfast. After breakfast, we went to the Oakview Cemetery to see if a permanent marker had been placed on StellaB's grave. Not only had it not, the temporary funeral home marker was

missing. We then went to the office of the Attorney who handled StellaB's estate and reviewed her will. It did not reveal any plans for a marker. We then went to the funeral home and asked them to check their records. They were most helpful and courteous and even reviewed her insurance to see if it provided for this expense. It did not. By now it was lunch time and we had plans to drive down to Round Rock to visit Ronnie Poore who is a stepson of Audy's. During that drive, we decided to bring this marker situation to the attention of Doye at the reunion on Saturday. We returned to Goldthwaite about 9 PM and turned in for a good nights rest.

#### **Friday September 8 -**

Friday morning, Audy was still tired from all the driving so he elected to "sleep in" while I took the car and went over to Oliver's for breakfast. I needed to go early and get back because I had plans to meet Leta Mae Durst and Beatrice Ethridge at the motel. I had already made arrangements to use the conference room. These two (2) relatives were Epley descendants and, while I had spoken with them on the phone, I had never met them.

Before discussing this meeting, let me refresh everyone's memory. When Jacob Burkett left Tennessee and moved his family to Texas, he already had an Aunt and Uncle in Texas — John Williams and Annie Epley Williams who was a sister to Jacobs mother, Mary 'Polly' Epley Burkett. Also, a Reverend Hoover, who had already moved to Texas but returned to middle Tennessee for a visit, apparently convinced Jacob and others, including some Epley relatives, to move to Texas. So the Epleys played a prominent role in this move to Texas.

I had run across Leta and Beatrice in my search for the family bible which legend says contained information about funds left in Europe by the family. Both were known by La-Juana Ivy, a daughter of Mae Delle Burkett Goodwin and a granddaughter of Joseph Lafayette Burkett. Leta had lived in Mullin until her husband died and then she moved to Mason, Texas. Beatrice and her husband, Earl, still live in Mullin. Both had already mailed me some information about the family but we wanted to meet face-to-face and have further discussions about our family.

Leta's grandmother was Elizabeth Epley Chesser and many of you will remember she was the young girl of about 15 who rode a horse all night in Tennessee during freezing weather to reach a Williams wagon train headed to Texas. She left the home of an Aunt and Uncle during the middle of the night without shoes and her feet were almost frozen. For some time it was felt she might lose both feet. Elizabeth later married John Dan Chesser, the founder of Chesser Valley, and I'll have more to say about Chesser Valley later. I had run across a note which said a family bible was in the possession of Louise Iola Chesser of Mullin, Texas. Remembering the legend that information about family funds left in Europe was recorded in a "family bible" led me to tracing Louise Iola Chesser who turned out to be Leta's mother.

In order to make clear the relationship of the Epleys and Burkett's, I am providing a chart on the next page which I believe will clearly show this relationship. Various information sources have shown they remained close for many years.

## *The Burkett Family*

Original Historian

*StellaB 'Nita' Jackson Jaynes*

*October 8, 1907 - June 18, 1996*



We wish to acknowledge the contributions made by StellaB 'Nita' Jackson Jaynes in compiling the initial data about our family. Without her efforts much of the information we have would probably never have been located. However, the impetus to continue her work began with a suggestion in 1992 by Gentry J.B. Burkett to have a family reunion in Huntsville, Alabama which was carried out by the efforts of Audy Majors. Over the years, Audy has continued his efforts toward the location and preservation of family information and artifacts.

CURRENT HISTORIAN AND EDITOR

Marvin Oliver Webb

ALABAMA REUNION MANAGER

Audy Majors

For information, write to:

*The Burkett Family*

c/o Oliver Webb

15439 Lakeshore Villas Drive # 77

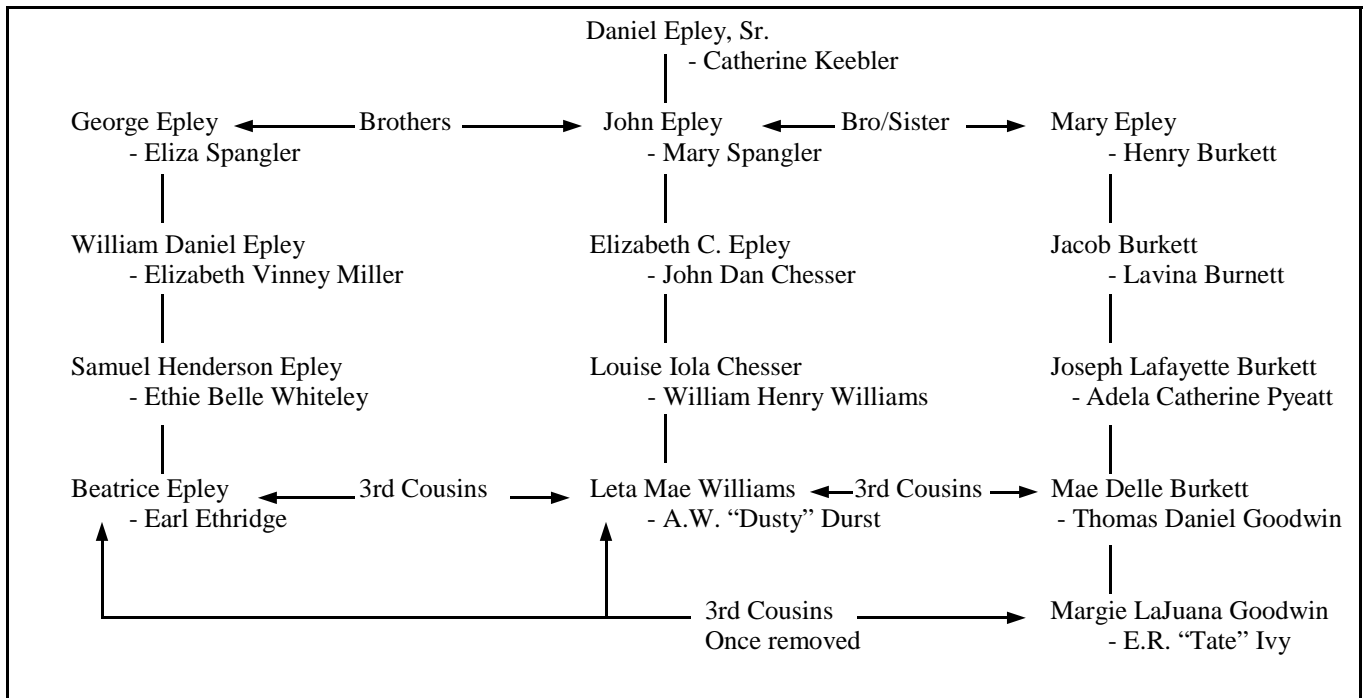
Tampa, FL 33613-1326

By phone 813/961-1679

By FAX 813/961-1679

By Email [hickeywebb@aol.com](mailto:hickeywebb@aol.com)

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I returned from breakfast at Oliver’s and opened the conference room. Shortly after that, Beatrice arrived. We had hardly begun talking when Leta arrived. Here they are shown below with Audy. That’s Beatrice on the left and Leta on the right.



Both had brought information and/or photo’s of the family and you’ll see more about that later. I will include one photo here of an old lamp which Leta brought. Just how old we do not know. It did not have a globe and was not designed for one. It does have a screw adjustment for increasing the amount of wick and therefore the amount of light produced. The adjustment screw is shown on the right hand side of the lamp. Most unusual (to me) and quite a keepsake to have.



Well, we talked — and talked — and talked. Finally, around noon, Beatrice announced that she had to return home. We asked her to attend the reunion the next day and she promised to try. (As you will learn later, she did come to the reunion Saturday.) However, before Beatrice left, Doye Fannin arrived, checked into the motel, and found us in the conference room so she got to meet and talk with both Beatrice and Leta.

Audy, Leta, and I decided to go over to Oliver’s for lunch so we headed out. At Oliver’s we continued talking about the families and, when we were finishing lunch, Leta asked what we would like to do. Both Audy and I said we would like to see Chesser Valley so away we went with Leta providing directions to Audy. As we turned off one road on to another, we dropped down into the Valley which was on the right of the road we were on. What a beautiful sight! Even though it was brown due to the drought, it was distinctly different from the surrounding countryside. Leta kept up a running commentary as we drove and finally we reached the end of the Valley.

Audy turned around and we headed back. We came to one spot which offered a great view and we got out to take pictures. Audy took three (3) beginning with the right, then the middle, and then the left. I have used the computer to piece them together to give a panoramic view. Leta had provided a lot of information about the Valley so there will be a completely separate article about it including the pictures taken by Audy.

By now, it’s getting late in the afternoon so we headed back to the motel in Goldthwaite. We went back to the conference room and talked for a few more minutes before Leta decided to head back to the cousins house in Mullin where she was staying. (She had driven up from her home in Mason, Texas Thursday afternoon.) Before leaving, Audy had I made her promise to come to the reun-



ion. She did promise, she did come, and called Beatrice Friday evening and got her to agree to come. As you will learn, they were both extremely happy they did come! And so were we!

Before leaving the conference room, Doye came in and, while we were talking, Katie Burkett Allen and husband Al arrived from O'Donnell, Texas. (Katie is a daughter of John Burkett; a granddaughter of George Washington Burkett; and a great granddaughter of Jacob Burkett. She is also the sister of Jim Mac and Joe Burkett who entertained us last year by playing the guitar and fiddle.) After we talked for a while, Doye told us that Bob would not be there for the reunion because of having to attend a funeral in New Mexico. She then said she was going up to the Bank to do some of the set-up work. Al very graciously offered to go along and help so away they went.

#### **Saturday September 9 -**

Audy and I were up early and headed over to — where else? — Oliver's. After breakfast we returned to the motel, gathered up our camera's, etc. and headed over to the Bank. Doye was already there as were some other relatives and we saw that Doye and Al had apparently gotten it pretty much set up the day before.

Pretty soon folks began arriving and the greetings started. It was fun to get up as they came through the door and greet them! Below is one group of folks talking.



*That's Katie Burkett Allen seated in the foreground. Then from left to right—Doye Fannin, LaJuana Ivy, Burkett Massey, Tom Cooper (with his back to the camera), and Berylene Beck*

When LaJuana arrived, she had a message for me from Betty Carter of Harker Heights. (Betty is an Epley descendant and both LaJuana and I have communicated with her.) Betty had planned to attend but called Saturday morning and told LaJuana she couldn't make it. Betty told LaJuana that some other Epley descendants from Lubbock also planned to be there and asked that I pass on the message to them that she would not be there. This couple from Lubbock, Dixie and Cliff Stogner, had already arrived and I had met them so I went over and told them Betty would not be coming.

In the meantime, Leta arrived and, not too long after

her arrival, we looked up and here was Beatrice. I introduced the Epley descendants, Leta, Beatrice, and Dixie and Cliff Stogner and they began a conversation as to who was descended from who and determined how they were related.

Leta and Beatrice then began talking to Burkett's they had known since childhood and it began to come out — how one of them had lived in a house which had been lived in by a Burkett; how one of them had been taught in school by a Burkett; shared memories from Mullin; and “do you remember . . .?” Later, when Beatrice was leaving, she thanked folks and told me, “I'm glad I came. This has been one of my most fun days ever! I have really enjoyed being here.”

Burkett Massey came over to where I was sitting and said, “Sorry I didn't send you any Burkett pecans last year but there just wasn't any because of the drought.” But he promised to send some when they do have a good year. I thanked him and told him I would appreciate them whichever year they had a crop!

Of course, while all of this is going on, there were conversations all over the place, folks were laying out the food. During this set-up time, Jim Burkett and wife Frances entertained us with some guitar playing and singing and then with Frances playing the piano. One of my favorites which they played was “San Antonio Rose” and the picture below was made while they were playing that. I might mention here that Jim and Katie's brother, Joe, was unable to make it because of attending a funeral many miles away. You will remember Joe played the fiddle last year.



*Jim and Frances Burkett of O'Donnell, Texas*

Then came the announcement, “Okay, everybody. Let's eat.” In the years I have been studying our family and attending reunions, there is one thing I have learned — you only have to tell Burkett's one time to eat! And again this year, the food was better than good — along with the pecan pies which I just happened to get a piece of again this year.

Finally, everybody began to slow down and Doye Fannin quieted everybody and began the presentation she

and husband Bob had worked long and hard on. They had secured three (3) large maps — one of Europe, one of the United States, and one of Texas. On each map, Doye had traced what she understood to be the path of our ancestors from Europe over to this country then down through NC and Tennessee out to Texas. Sharon Fleming assisted Doye by wielding the map pointer and pointing to each location as Doye proceeded with her narrative. It was an excellent presentation enjoyed by all. While many had heard and generally understood how the family reached Texas, it was made really clear by the oral presentation and use of the maps. Thanks, Doye, for your hard work and the clearness of your presentation. We enjoyed it!

Below is a photo showing the maps beginning with Europe on the far right, the United States in the middle, and Texas on the left.



*If there had been some way to crop out the people and still show the maps, I would have done that. As it is, I had to leave us in. That's Dixie Stogner and husband Cliff from Lubbock, Texas and, of course, yours truly.*

After the presentation, Doye brought to everybody's attention that there was no permanent marker on StellaB's grave. A collection was taken up for that purpose. Doye later contacted the funeral home and they agreed to take care of getting the marker made and placed on her grave. This has now been done.

Finally, some folks had started to leave and it was obvious that it was time to clean up and call an end to another reunion. This is always the sad time to me when you have to start saying goodbyes for another year. I looked around for Audy and found he was helping fold the tables and chairs and putting them away. As I have said before, it's a great place to have the reunion and everyone should appreciate the Bank's courtesy in allowing the use of this community room. Looking around at the folks doing the cleanup, I told Burkett Massey I wanted a picture of him and his grandson, Burkett Lee Massey. Burkett Lee is a

son of Bobby Massey. Here it is below.



Before closing this out, I have to add there was one person I missed this year — Juanelle Curtis. She was unable to be with us because of health problems. ***But you know what? She called me and Audy at the Redbud Inn that night! That really tickled me and Audy.***

Since our plans were to go on up to Clyde Sunday and knowing from previous years about bird season, Audy and I were again spending Saturday night in Goldthwaite at the Redbud Inn. Juanelle had apparently remembered that. Also, Doye's husband, Bob, arrived from New Mexico but Audy and I were already in our pajamas so we didn't get to visit with him until Sunday morning.

Sunday morning we left the motel and went to — you guessed it — Oliver's for breakfast. I had finally given up on getting a discount because my name was Oliver but they have coffee mugs with "Oliver's" on them. While eating, Audy and I asked if we could buy a couple of them. The waitress said she would check. Just as we were finishing, the waitress showed up with 2 cups and said they were free! Well, that got our day off to a good start! It was a beautiful day and, with Audy driving, I was able to look back and say so long until next year as we left Goldthwaite and passed through Mullin on the way to Clyde. ■

## Chesser Valley Coming Up! -

Along with Williams Ranch, Chesser Valley played a big role in the lives of our relatives who moved out to Texas. Thanks to Leta Mae Durst and Beatrice Ethridge, we now have additional information about the families and the Valley itself.

John Dan and Elizabeth Chesser had 11 children as shown by the family bible which Leta brought to the reunion. She also brought some pictures not previously published. This expanded story begins on the next page.



*John Dan and Elizabeth Epley Chesser with 8 of their 11 children — About 1888*

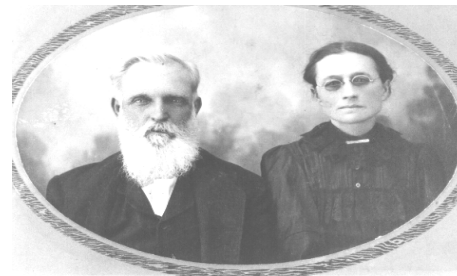
Children from L to R — Front is Ardella (Della), Louise Iola (Ola) and Bertie (Bert). Rear is Mary Ann (holding her son Walter Johnston), Joseph S. (Joe), George Calvin (George), Henry Walter (Walter), and James (Jim). Not shown is son William F. Chesser who died May 10, 1871; son John S. and son Ben E. Using the estimated date of 1888 based on Bert's birth-date of April 13, 1886, John would have been 25 years old and Ben would have been 21. Where they were is unknown.

## The Chesser Family -

John Dan Chesser and Elizabeth Caroline Epley were married December 20, 1860 in Burnet County, Texas by Rev. Collier. Witnesses on the marriage license were William Chesser and George Epley.

Louise Iola (Ola), front row above, married William Henry Williams and was the mother of Leta Mae Williams Durst who provided these pictures and who also has the Chesser family bible from which information was taken.

Leta Mae's mother Ola also owned a magazine *The Cattleman* published in November 1944 which contained the most complete story I have ever seen about Chesser Valley. On the next page is the cover of that magazine and the article follows. I believe you will enjoy this article even though you may have already read portions of it. ■



*John Dan & Elizabeth Epley Chesser*



November 1944 (Keep in mind this was written in November 1944)





*The Chesser Valley farmhouse as it might have looked on any afternoon when some of the children and grandchildren were home. John Dan and Elizabeth are standing at the extreme left. (Notice the beautiful quilts in the background)*

## **CHESSER VALLEY**

*By Louise Gartman Smith*

The burned patch where a big house stood, a native rock house still livable, and the mouldering walls of an old wooden school house — these scattered over Sleepy Hollow are all that are left of Chesser Valley.

Sleepy Hollow, now a cattle ranch and one of the largest in or around Brown and Mills Counties, takes in not only the Chesser Valley Farm but nearly all the land owned by the pioneers who settled Chesser Valley in the sixties. The rock house, now occupied by the Cooksey brothers who are in charge of Sleepy Hollow, is the original home built by George Williams on land taken up in 1860.

John Dan Chesser was born March 20, 1842. Where he was born is not known, but he was to live his life in West Texas and there leave his mark and his name on the history of the state. His wife, who helped him build in Chesser Valley, was born in Tennessee.

Elizabeth Epley was also born in 1842 and she and a younger sister were early left to the care of an aunt and uncle in Tennessee who were not too glad to be charged with them.

The trail by which Elizabeth came to Texas and eventually joined John Dan Chesser was not an easy one.

Sometime after 1850, after old John Williams had found the springs on Herd Pen Branch and established Williams Ranch, he encouraged his sons and relatives to follow him to the new land in Texas. Bill Williams formed a wagon train, and the Epley girls, hearing of it, determined to run away and go with the Williams to Texas.

Nothing is known of Avery Toby, except he slipped the two Epley girls out of a window one bitter cold night, and delivered them to Bill Williams. Elizabeth was barefoot, and she wrapped a bit of an old blanket around her and clung behind Bill Williams on his horse as they rode through the night to join the wagon train. They rode all night and Elizabeth's feet were frost-bitten when at last she reached the wagons. They were in bad shape throughout the whole trip, and for a long time it appeared that she would lose both feet. She was fifteen years old.

Mrs. Bill Williams cared for both of the Epley girls, though eventually other members of the Epley family came to Texas and settled at Williams Ranch and Chesser Valley. In 1860, John Dan Chesser and Elizabeth were married in the Williams home. John Dan prepared for the future by staking a claim six miles from the Ranch, in the valley that was later to bear his name, and then went to work to support his wife. They were both eighteen years of age.

They walked, carrying their meager possessions in their hands, and eventually got to Burnet, Texas, where John had a job carrying the mail. They honeymooned in the one-room rock house that constituted the post office. John Dan carried the mail to Fredericksburg, where he carved his name on one of the old stone buildings. There it still stands, plain for all to read.

Then John Dan became a Texas Ranger, a position he held for several years and which kept him from serving in the Civil War. He took his wife back west and established



Chesser Valley.

The first settlers, who went into the Indian area with him, were Wes Head, Bud Forsyth, Bill Epley (an uncle to Elizabeth), and two sons of old John Williams, Bill and George. The Indians were still troublesome in Chesser Valley. So the Williams brothers lived at Williams Ranch and rode over to work their land but John Dan stayed on his place and built his home.

This first home was a one-room log cabin. Later, as the family enlarged — there were in all eleven children — more rooms were built on to the cabin and eventually the whole thing was covered over with lumber to form a frame house. The original log cabin room remained the bedroom of John Dan and his wife until their deaths.

This house was more than just a home for the ever-growing Chesser family. As the Indians were pushed out and more people came in, it was the center of the community, the hotel for the stranger. No charge was made for accommodating and feeding any traveler who wished to stop there. John Dan began to be called Uncle Dan, and it was to him that the injured, the poor, or the homeless drifted.

The last Indian raid in this section of the country occurred in 1878. But on May 23 of 1863, the Comanches took a scalp in Chesser Valley itself.

John and Bill Morris had made a trip to Ft. Sumpter, New Mexico, passing safely through the Indian country. They returned with a small pack train. About dawn on the morning of the twenty-third they were attacked by a small group of Comanches. Bill escaped, but John was shot and scalped. They had gotten within twelve miles of home.

Just before breakfast, Bill arrived breathless at the Chesser farmhouse. He stammered out his story. Elizabeth, convinced that John Dan could do nothing to aid John, and realizing that the little party of Indians would not attack further into the valley, calmly cooked breakfast and insisted that the men eat before leaving the house. They found John's body and brought it in on one of his own pack animals. His was one of the first graves in Williams Ranch cemetery, and it lies under a heap of great slabs of stone, built up like a crypt above ground.

In later days, there was a doctor at Williams Ranch, six miles away, but in the sixties it was necessary to go to Austin for a physician if anyone insisted on having one. One day Elizabeth fainted and could not be revived. Half crazy with fright, John Dan jumped on his horse and started for Austin. When he returned with the doctor three days later, Elizabeth was still unconscious. But the doctor was able to save her, so the 250-mile journey was worthwhile.

Chesser Valley was famous for the frequency and fervency of its camp meetings. They were the biggest held in the county and whole families came by wagon for many miles to attend. They camped out in a grove of live oak trees near the tabernacle, built of brush laid up on poles, and they stayed for a week or two of preaching and praying. The preacher always stayed at the Chesser's regard-

less of the denomination, though the Chesser's were devout Methodists.

Sometimes there might be two or three ministers, of different sects living at the Chesser's while they rode across country for their congregations. John Dan would kill a deer or fat hog when the preacher came and entertain lavishly. The Chesser smokehouse was full of meat and the cellar was always full of potatoes, dried beans and vegetables. John Dan thought nothing of setting a table for fifty people. Fifty was, in fact, almost an every Sunday gathering, as John Dan asked his neighbors home from church for Sunday dinner. His wife and three daughters got up before dawn on Sunday to prepare for it.

Family prayer was retained as a daily custom in the Chesser home until John's death in 1914. Each night the entire family, the servants, and whatever company there might be, gathered in the living room and listened to John Dan read the scriptures and then pray. A visiting preacher might occasionally conduct the service. The family Bible is now in the possession of Mrs. Henry Williams, of Mullin, who was Ola Chesser. (*This is the Bible now in the possession of Leta Mae Durst who is a daughter of Ola and Henry Williams.*)

In 1869, when the mob troubles were first beginning at Williams Ranch, the first mob swept down on Chesser Valley and searched John Dan's home. Mrs. Felix Johnson of Brownwood, who was then Mary Chesser and a child of five, remembers it as the most frightening moment of her life. She says that adults and children alike were scared almost to death, more frightened than they had been of Indians. But no one was molested, and no one ever knew why the house was searched.

None of the Chessers was involved in the mob trouble, largely because John Dan was such an old settler and so highly respected. However, as the terror grew through the 1870's, it lapped over into Chesser Valley and the stories of murder were whispered up and down the valley.

In 1887, Andrew Smith, who lived in a rent house belonging to the Chessers, found a Mexican hanging from a live oak tree near Blanket Creek, about three miles from the Chesser Valley farm.

Investigation found the Mexican quite dead, and it was later reported that he had been hanged by mistake. He was a close friend of a man named Henry Leal. When the mob searched for Leal — for a reason long since lost — they caught the Mexican in the dark and hanged him without too close inquiry about his identity.

The lumber for the first school at Chesser Valley was hauled from Round Rock by ox-wagon by the men of the community, who divided the work among them. It was the biggest school in Brown county, at one time having about fifty students. It was a one-teacher school in a one-room school house. The floor was of hard-packed dirt, and the first benches were split logs, later replaced by plank benches and desks. The plank floor came in 1890. The principal subjects were the three "R's", reading, 'riting and 'rithmetic. Geography was taught but no history.

One of the most exciting tales still told in the Chesser clan is "how Aunt Nancy was eaten by the bear." One day in 1876, Nancy Epley, Elizabeth's cousin, went down from her uncle's log cabin to the old John Williams place to borrow some smoothing irons. She started home and was attacked by a black bear cub, one of two chained to stobs in the Williams yard. Old John had trapped them and was having cages built to transport them to Austin for sale.

The bear, his stake and chain dragging behind him, seized Nancy's arm. She screamed and tried to run back to the house. Old Rock, the Williams blue scraggy dog, attacked the bear and tried to pull him away, but the bear was too big. He threw off the dog and caught at Nancy again, tearing her face and shoulders. The dog kept worrying the bear and Nancy finally got into the house.

But the door was not very strong and the bear started to tear it down. The house was full of women who that morning had been washing at the spring. They brought some fresh-killed beef from the kitchen and cut it into strips. The meat was thrust out the window of the cabin to the bear, and he left the door to eat it. Another woman slipped out the back door, got on a horse, and rode down to the mill at Williams Ranch for help.

Ben White, who worked in the mill and was then building cages for the bears, heard the screaming and started for the cabin. He met the woman coming for help but had to ride back to the mill for his gun. He finally killed the bear.

Elizabeth Chesser bound up Nancy's wounds and stopped the flow of blood which had so maddened the bear, but Nancy forever after bore the scars of the mauling.

Part of the old Chesser Valley community is now occupied by the maneuvering area from Camp Bowie at Brownwood. Camp Bowie officials have also repaired and used part of the old Wire Road, which ran through Chesser Valley and Williams Ranch. The Wire Road was so named because it was the trail worn during the building of the first telegraph line through this country from Austin to Ft. Concho, now San Angelo.

One of the tragedies that the old Chesser Valley Farm saw was the death of three-year-old Ellen Williams, daughter of George and Jackie Williams and granddaughter of old John, on September 21, 1881. The Williams were spending the day with the Chessers, and all the children old enough had gone grape-hunting. Ellen, too small to go, took a piece of bread from the kitchen and wandered out to the front porch to eat in the shade.

Her short legs carried her too near the edge of the porch and she stumbled against a long wooden flower box. In falling, she struck the edge of the porch and broke her neck.

In the hot September weather, the dead did not linger long at Chesser Valley. Elizabeth Chesser and Mrs. Bud Foresythe sewed all afternoon and through the night to make a burial dress for the funeral service to be held the next day at the Chesser home. Just at dusk the grape-hunters returned laden with a bumper crop of mustang

grapes, themselves purple stained and dirty. There was no way to remove the stains before the funeral. Burial was in the Williams Ranch cemetery, where Ellen Williams lay not far from the graves of John Morris, several Indians, the victims of a dozen or more mob murders, and a few children who had died peacefully and not by violence.

Though there was sorrow and sudden death in the pioneer days, there was laughter and practical joking also. Walter Chesser, one of John Dan's boys, was an inveterate prankster, and tales of his escapades still are told in Mullin and Goldthwaite.

The Chessers had an old egg-sucking dog that they one day instructed Walter to destroy. He killed the dog and then he and one of the younger boys dressed the carcass in some of Walter's clothes and hung it in a tree. The next day the hanging was reported in Mullin, a town still sensitive to the memory of hangings and the violence of mob days. The news spread that the body of a man was suspended from a live oak tree off the Wire Road.

The justice of the peace and all the men rode out to see, and when it was discovered that it was only a dog they were so mad they wanted to prosecute the boys. Bill Williams, son of old John and benefactor of the young Elizabeth, rode into Goldthwaite ahead of the Mullin delegation and cooked up another practical joke with the district judge at Goldthwaite.

When the justice of the peace, a man named Belle, who had long been the butt of jokes in Mullin, arrived, the judge inquired sternly who had last handled the dog's body. The J.P. replied that he had cut it down. Asked if he had buried it, he said that he had left it lying where it fell, in the old Wire Road.

The judge then warned that the nearest residents, the Chessers, were going to file a complaint against the men for leaving dead livestock in the right of way. So the J.P. got into his hack and went back to bury the dog as fast as he could, and Walter Chesser went unpunished for his prank.

One of the more picturesque figures of the early days was Columbus Chesser, who is thought to have been a brother to John Dan, but may have been half-brother or cousin. He was a huge man, weighing nearly five hundred pounds. On Saturdays he used to come to Goldthwaite, sitting serenely in a rocking chair placed in the bed of a wagon, his son driving. He was a full wagon load.

Though most of the colored people brought into Williams Ranch in the sixties were later expelled by the mobs, one at least benefited from having served there. Harriet, an old Williams Ranch slave, was a specialist in the preparation of infare suppers, and she passed the talent to her daughter, Alice. In 1880, Alice cooked the infare supper at the Chesser Valley Farm for the wedding of Mary A. Chesser and Felix Johnson. (*An infare is a reception for a newly married couple.*)

It must have been a memorable banquet, for in 1890 Alice, then living in Fort Worth, appealed to the Chessers to help prove her age and secure an old age pension. Mem-

ory of the infare supper for the wedding was about the only thing the Chessers could recall but from that it could be proved that Alice was over sixty-five. She was actually about eighty.

John Dan Chesser died in 1914, aged 71 years, 11 months, and 24 days. Elizabeth disposed of the original Chesser Valley farm. She died in 1924, and in 1926 the old farmhouse and outbuildings were destroyed by fire and the place was incorporated into the Sleepy Hollow cattle ranch.

Of the early settlers who braved Indians, isolation, and death in many forms to settle the ranch land near Herd Pen Branch, little remains except stories passed from father to son. Their descendants forsook Chesser Valley when the railroad was built through Goldthwaite and Mullin, and the boys and girls of Foresythes, Heads, Epleys, Williams, and Chessers go to newer school houses now, living only in story the adventures of their grandparents and great grandparents. ■



*Elizabeth Caroline Epley Chesser with children Bert and Louise Iola (Ola) - Date is unknown*



**CHESSER VALLEY -**

This is the series of 3 photo's taken by Audy and which I pieced together using the computer. The fence is actually straight but looks crooked due to the closeness to the camera. Focus on the horizon to appreciate the view. Leta Mae Durst tells me the Valley consisted of about 1700 acres to the best of her recollection. The brown grass is the result of the drought.



The following article also comes from the November 1944 issue of The Cattleman magazine.

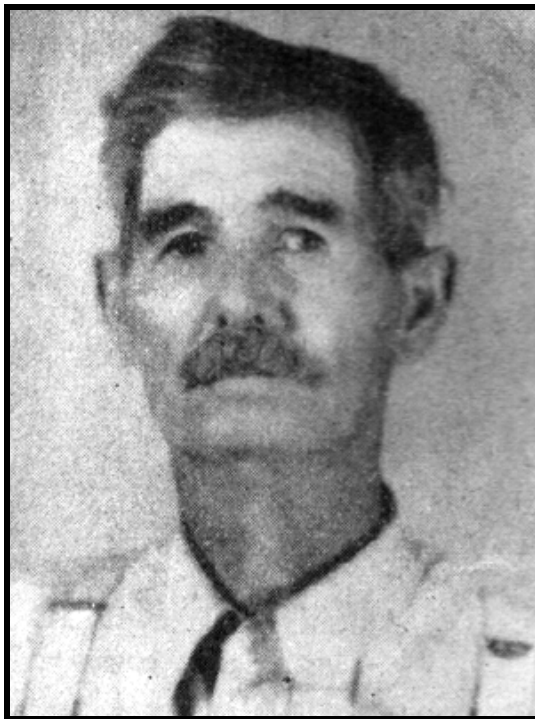
## Free Range Days in the Panhandle -

*R. F. (Frank) Groves of Stinnet, Texas was 87 years old in January. He came to the Panhandle sixty-five years ago. He saw the last of the Indians, the Buffalo, and the Mustangs. He saw the last of the open range, the old-time cowboys, and the freighters. He was here to see the first fence, the first houses and the first towns, the first railroads, the first wheat fields, and the first oil wells.*

*Editor's Note: Mr. Groves died October 6, while this article was being prepared for publication.*

By R. F. (Frank) Groves

War-time and soldiers always remind me of one of my first unusual experiences in the Panhandle in the early days. It was war-time then, too, and soldiers had been stationed in Old Mobeetie to keep the Indians pushed back in the Indian Territory. A battalion of Negroes was stationed there, too. We were taking Spade cattle up the Old Wrath Trail to Dodge City, when several miles out from Old Mobeetie we met a Negro soldier afoot after the army work horses. I loped around the herd, which was showing signs of stampeding, and yelled, "Go 'round the herd! Go 'round! You'll stampede the herd and we'll have a dead nigger!"



*Frank Groves*

"Boss, I'se got higher ideahs dan dat," said the Negro and he walked right through the middle of the herd. Well, we didn't have time to even think about killing that Negro, for those cattle were gone thunder-callaperin' and we spent the rest of the morning trying to get our herd started back down the trail.

In April of 1879, J. F. Evans and J. P. Warner started from Blossom Prairie, in Lamar County, with 2,000 head of cattle they had bought in Red River, Lamar, and Hunt Counties. I had taken some horses from Sherman to Blossom Prairie for Evans and they persuaded me to go on to the Panhandle with the herd. Cows were five and six dollars that year. By 1882, they were forty and fifty dollars. We reached White Fish near the mouth of Salt Fork 'long in the summer. There was plenty of rain and lots of grass in '79. The hunters had finished off the buffalo the year before, which gave the grass a good chance to grow. There was just one bunch of buffalo here in '79 that ranged from Tascosa to Old Clarendon. The only wild buffalo I saw were where the present town of Hedley is.

The bone gathering and hauling was under way when I came. Jim Killfoil had bones gathered in piles all over this part of the country when the railroads came. He shipped them at a good price. One day while gathering bones on Lay Creek, he got bit by a rattlesnake and had to ride fifteen miles to Clarendon to the doctor. It was quite a spell before he got over it.

I was trail Boss for the Spades for three years. The cowboys who were not needed to ride line in the winter, or the ones who did not want to spend a long cold winter in the Panhandle, went home after the Fall roundups with the understanding they would be back for the Spring roundups which usually started in May unless it was a late Spring, and then not until June. From half to three-fourths of the boys stayed through the winter.

The cattle would drift as far south as Dickens County in the winter. After the Spring roundups were over and each outfit had rounded out their cows and branded their calves, they began preparations for the Fall round-up. They usually kept the young cows and calves and started up the trail with fat cows and beef steers in August. It took about a month to make the trip to Dodge City or New Kiowa. In 1882, the Spades took the fat cows and beef steers up the trail that they had brought to the Panhandle in '79. They brought from forty to fifty dollars. Each ranch outfit took their own cattle up the trail. Goodnight lost several steers in the breaks near Old Tascosa while taking a herd up the trail. They got wild as deer. After they had run wild several years, John Grady went after them. Not a one of the boys wanted the job of helping him; so he went by himself and had to hogtie each steer as he brought them out of the breaks. And while he had them tied down, he dehorned them with a short handled ax to keep them from fighting him and his pony when he turned them loose. The cowboys all thought they were the queerest looking creatures they ever saw, for they did not dehorn in this country in those days. They were all sent up the trail the next year.

In those days when fortunes were being made overnight in this land of free grass, no one spent a lot of time breaking and training a horse before he was used as a cowpony. There was always a good show nearly every morning as some boy in the bunch tried to mount his cowpony and get him quieted down for a hard day's work. The first qualifications of a cowboy in those days was to be able to "keep a leg on each side and his mind in the middle" of any pony in his remuda. (*remuda — the herd of horses from which are chosen those to be used for the day.*) When a horse was gentle enough that a boy could mount him in the early morning hours with any sense of security, it was generally given to a tenderfoot with the outfit who had to have a horse that was gentle so he could stay with us long enough to learn the "ropes" and make a hand.

Lord O'Donnell (*of England*) owned a controlling interest in the Quarter Circle Hearts. When he sent his son, Charles O'Donnell, to the United States from England in 1884 to learn the cattle business, A. S. McKinney, Range Boss of the Hearts, met him at Harold and brought him to Clarendon. We had just brought about fifteen hundred head of cattle from South Texas, when they came to the ranch. I was fixing to stand night guard. McKinney asked me if I would take Charlie and I told him I would. I asked Charlie if he could ride a horse. He told me that was what he had come from England to learn. So I put him on Ole Brownie, an extra good cowpony that was gentle. I told him we would meet each other half way round the herd, but I went nearly clear around before I found Charlie.

"Charlie, can't you whip up?" I asked.

"It's a dommed poor 'orse that can't walk as fast as a cow," replied Charlie.

"But these cattle are milling," I told him. And getting down, I tied the bridle reins to the saddle horn and told Charlie to leave them there, but to be sure and stay on the horse. After giving Ole Brownie a slap across the rump with my quirt, I got on my horse and Ole Brownie met me half way round the herd. Charlie told me that his horse went faster with the bridle reins tied to the saddle horn, but that he didn't always go in a smooth circle. "An b'gorra," he said, "When 'e run out away from the herd and started back, I sure 'ad one 'ell of a time staying on!" I laughed and told Charlie that the old horse was after a steer to bring him back to the herd. But Charlie was not a tenderfoot that needed a gentle horse very long. After Charlie had become the best among top cowhands, we laughed about Ole Brownie seeing him through that first cold, rainy night. Charlie was general manager of the Bell outfit for years.

But talking about horses, when I first came here, the wild Mustangs roamed the prairie in herds, and caused plenty of grief to many a cowboy who let them get away with one of his mounts. Sometimes you would find a Mustang in some cowboys string of saddle horses. But it took lots of time, patience, hard work, and plenty of fresh mounts to get one corralled and gentle, for there were no fences then. We seldom ever got the one we started out after. I made a fairly good cowpony out of one that I caught when he was young. He was tough as a boot, and I never did ride the little rascal down, but he thought part of his days work was to buck his rider off the first thing every

morning. The rest of the day he was all right.

Most of our cow ponies were from Spanish stock, but in about 1876, the RO's brought in some Cleveland Bays from England. I never rode one that ever saw a cow. The Hearts had one that was mighty fine to make the trip back home on. I knew where all the water holes were from going up the trail with cattle; so I would head across the country from Sherman. That old Cleveland Bay would hit a running walk and go steady and easy all day.

I spent the winter of 1883-84 for the Spades on Lay Creek in the RO range. I had learned to cook at home. Word about good things to eat traveled faster than any kind of news among the young husky cowboys in the Panhandle, and they all liked to stop at my camp when they got a chance. One day Harve Pemberton and Billy Nunn, who worked up North for the Turkey Track or the OC, I don't remember which, were going Southeast of my camp to a round-up. Harve wanted to make it to my camp for the night, but Billy thought it was too much out of the way. Harve had eaten with me before and he told Billy that they would never regret it. Game was plentiful, and that camp boasted a cook stove. I had baked turkey and dressing and dumplings. We had hot biscuits and dried apple cobbler for supper. After we got through eating, Billy declared he would ride many a mile out of the way for a supper like that. 'Long about nine o'clock, while we still sitting around talking, a cyclone hit, and took the top off our dugout. Rain came pouring down, mud from the dugout was everywhere, and I was wondering if we could find a dry place to sleep when Billy said, "Grovie, did the turkey get blown away?" I told him we had plenty of turkey in the oven. We found that our beds were still dry under the "tarp."

One day when I went by Homer Mills who was in line camp just above where the McClellan dam is now, he said, "Grovie, there's some kind of big animal comes in my dugout every night and gets my grub." I asked him why he didn't lock the door. He said that it broke the lock, and come in anyway. "Then I'd shut the door after he comes in and shoot him," I said. But he wouldn't talk about shutting himself in with any animal whose foot tracks was larger than a man's hand. One day a negro who was working for B. H. White in Clarendon, was sent down after wood where these trees were blown down. Among these dead logs lay a big Mexican lion or cougar. The negro went back to the wagon and got his gun and shot the cougar and hauled him back to Clarendon. He measured eight feet from the tip of his nose to the tip of his tail.

When going up the trail with cattle, blackbirds would get started with a herd catching the flies off the backs of the cattle. They would often go on to Dodge City. In the year of 1885 soon after I started up the trail with beef cattle for the Hearts, a flock of blackbirds took up with the herd in Gray County. One got too close to me one day and I whacked off his tail feathers with my quirt. When we reached Dodge 33 days later, the boys all laughed about the bob-tailed blackbird still being with us. (*quirt — a riding whip with a short handle and a rawhide lash.*)

In November of 1882, my pony stepped in a



quirt

prairie dog hole and fell, breaking my leg in two places. The boys got a buckboard and took me to Vernon (*Texas*), which was the closest place to a doctor. My leg was broken about dark one evening and the doctor set it the next day about four o'clock. I stayed in Vernon six weeks flat on my back. I got home in Sherman for Christmas dinner in 1882. Evans did mighty good by me. He paid my doctor bills and paid me wages all the time. I stayed home until March, and then came back to Spade Headquarters in Glenwood while I was still using one crutch. I cooked at Headquarters until June, when I started riding again as wagon boss.

'Long about 1882, they had some riding and roping at Old Mobeetie. Old Alf, a big yellow Negro who worked for Bill Haney, was one of the best ropers around. The white boys didn't rope with him, but made up a purse and he roped by himself. On the 4th of July in 1883, we all went to a picnic up on Spring Creek on Goodnight's. We had lots of public speaking, the speakers being *Gyp A. Brown*, a lawyer from Clarendon. His wife was a sister to Mrs. Evans. *Parson Allan*, a brother-in-law to L. H. Carhart. *Judge Frank Wills* from Montague County. And perhaps some others that I have forgotten. *Charles Goodnight* donated the beef and a blacksmith by the name of *Jim Burdick* barbecued the beef and it sure was good. A boy by the name of *Ellis* made lemonade out of cold spring water. There was no ice. The Panhandle country has seen many changes since those days. ■

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## Palomino and Quarter Horses -

Horses were of the utmost importance to the early settlers. A strong, fast horse could literally be the difference between life and death in those early days. Below is a description of two favorite horses.

### THE PALOMINO -

The Palomino is a horse color, not a breed. This golden horse, who was the choice of ancient emperors, Kings and Queens, the beloved steed in Greek mythology, the pride of Queen Isabella's Spanish court, the treasured mount of ancient tribes, and companion of the Conquistadors is still with us today. Their appeal is international. The characteristic Palomino is that of a newly minted 14-karat gold coin with variations from light to dark. The skin is usually gray, black, brown or motley without underlying pink skins or spots, except on the face or legs. The eyes are usually black, hazel or brown. The mane and tail must be white with not more than 15 percent dark, sorrel, or chestnut hairs. Most Palomino's stand between 14 and 17 hands. I believe that is a Palomino on page 7 of this issue and W.L. "Bill" Williams had a Palomino which was called "Old Yellow." (*This definition of a Palomino was published by the Palomino Horse Breeders of America.*)

### THE QUARTER HORSE -

The quarter horse is an American breed of light horse

that originated during the colonial era, partly from Arabian ancestry. The name refers to the horse's reputation for speed at the quarter-mile distance. It can spring into full speed and consequently is faster than the Thoroughbred for a short sprint. The breed was by far the most popular cattle horse in the early west. It continues in this role today and is used almost exclusively for rodeo events such as cutting, roping, and barrel racing. Registered quarter horses are of solid colors, stand 15 to 16 hands (60 — 64 inches) high, weigh over 1,000 pounds and have thick muscular shoulders and short necks.

In Volume 3, 2000 on page 5, I wrote about Lorenzo L. "Pa" Epley and the fact that he started raising quarter horses. ■

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## Donkeys and Coyotes -

Now many of you already know about this but I am sure there are some like me who do not know. While riding out to visit Chesser Valley with Audy Majors and Leta Mae Durst, I made the comment I had seen a lot of donkeys during mine and Audy's trips to Texas and I asked Leta what they used them for. It turns out Donkeys and Coyotes are natural enemies and Donkeys are placed in pastures to keep the coyotes away from the cattle and/or sheep. Donkeys will chase, kick, and bite a coyote and are a much better "watchdog" than a dog is! ■

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## Burketts, Epleys and Williams —

I work with our family almost every day — and I can still get confused and I'm sure some of you also get confused.

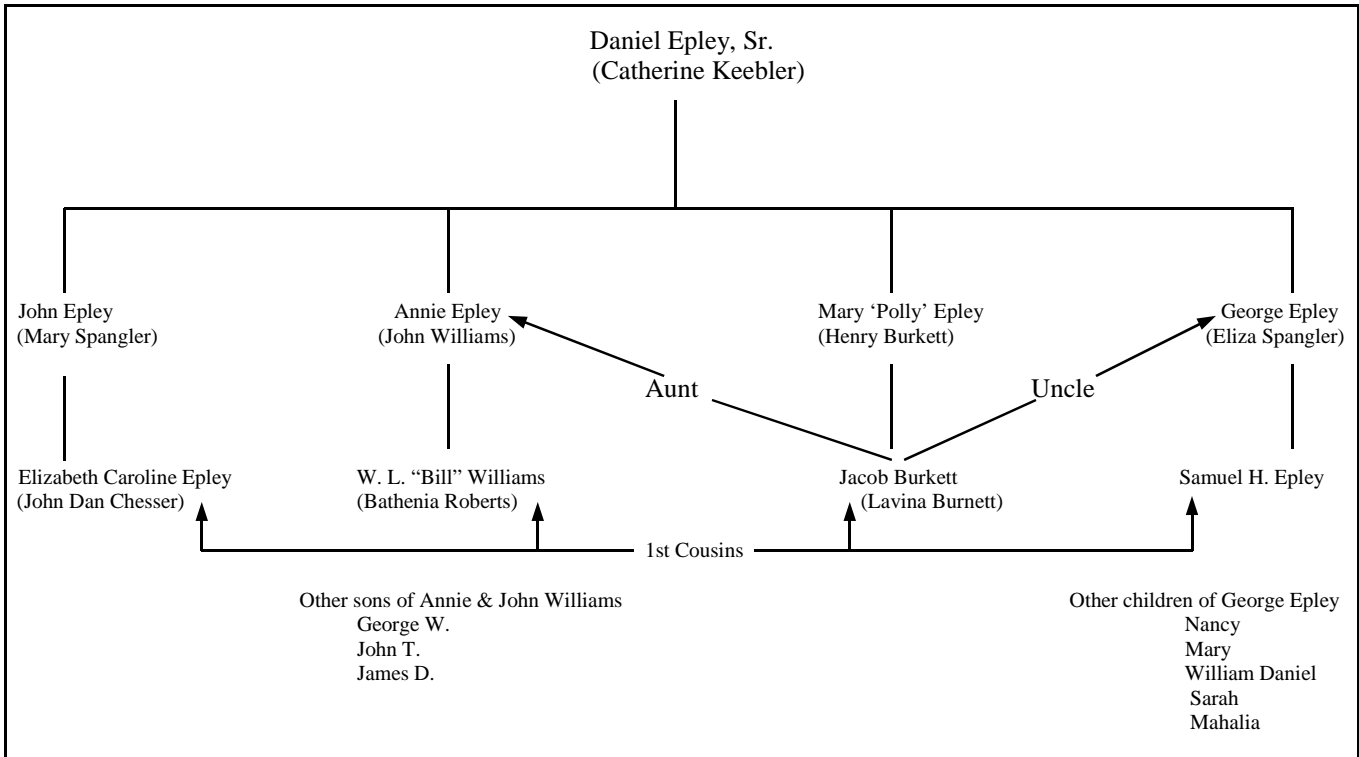
This next article is about the Williams Family of Texas and perhaps a little review might help avoid any possible confusion and help understand an article about the Williams Family when this is a Burkett newsletter.

Some years back when I first wrote about Jacob Burkett leaving middle Tennessee and moving to Texas with his family of 7 children, the youngest of which was only 1 year old, I wondered what caused him to undertake what appeared at that time to be a very drastic move. Now, with the benefit of information gathered over the years, it's easier to understand why he made the move and why it wasn't such a drastic move after all.

In one article, I made reference to a Reverend Hoover who had moved from Tennessee to Texas and, in another, I spoke of the wagon train from Tennessee to Texas which Elizabeth Caroline Epley and her sister joined. To put all of this in perspective, let's review the time frame for these moves.

First, keep in mind that Jacob did not make his move until 1865, after the end of the Civil War. By that time, he already had several relatives in Texas. To help understand this relationship, I have prepared the following chart.





With reference to the above chart, Annie Epley and husband John Williams with their children were in Texas about 1856. Elizabeth Caroline Epley and sister Louiza Ann Epley went to Texas about 1857 in a wagon train organized by Bill Williams. George Epley was there with his family by at least 1860 since he was a witness to the marriage of Elizabeth Caroline to John Dan Chesser.

Therefore, by the time Jacob arrived in Texas in 1865, an Aunt (Annie Epley Williams) and an Uncle (George Epley) on his mother's side were already there along with numerous cousins Reverend Hoover. So it wasn't like he went to a new environment where he didn't know anybody. He had several relatives who had already been living there for years and knew exactly what the conditions were and could tell him what to expect. Given this situation, it appears not to have been such a bold and drastic move after all for him to take his family to Texas. With this as background, let's look at the Williams Family.

### The Williams Family of Texas -

*Recognition and appreciation must be given to Luther L. Williams who has extensively researched not only the Williams Family but the conditions which existed at the time. In past issues, excerpts of Luther's work have been used and acknowledged but I now have much more of his work thanks to Leta Mae Durst and Beatrice Ethridge. Luther is a great grandson of William Lyon "Bill" Williams and his second wife, Sarah Conner; a grandson of Silas Marion Williams; and a son of Luther Lois Williams.*

*In his writings, Luther gives special thanks to Dr. Julia Abbott Janeway of the English Department, University*

*of Denver, for her help and valuable suggestions and we repeat that here.*

John Williams' family originally came from Germany. The family settled first in the State of Pennsylvania, but migrated to North Carolina in the late 1700's. John Williams was born February 6, 1804 in Lincoln County, North Carolina. He married Annie Epley in 1824 and moved to Williamson County, Tennessee where he bought 200 acres of state land for 12 and one-half cents per acre. He began a family, supporting them by farming and working as a cooper making tubs and barrels from wood. In 1850, the Cannon County, Tennessee census records the following children in the household: William L. (age 20), George W. (age 18), John T. (age 16), James D. (age 12), David A. (age 9), and Elizabeth C. (age 3). Sometime after September 1850, John moved his family to Hickory County, Missouri, then to Texas in 1855 where they settled in Brown County next to the big springs which would later be named Herd Pen Creek.

While all of the sons appear to have played important roles in the settlement around Herd Pen Creek which would later become known as Williams Ranch, more has been recorded about the oldest son, William L. "Bill" Williams.

Bill Williams was born in Warren County (now Cannon County), Tennessee on January 27, 1830. Bill's first wife was Bethenia Roberts, a belle from Mississippi. They were married at Byrds Store, Brown County, Texas in 1861. They had five children. Bethenia died from complications of child birth in April of 1873 and her infant daughter, Nancy A., died a few days later. Bill's second wife was Sarah Sabrena Conner, a daughter of Captain John Conner of the Texas Rangers. They were married at San Saba,



*The W. L. "Bill" Williams Family*

1 - Claude Malone (son of Julia # 6); 2 - Berl Williams (son of Burl Avery "Ave" Williams # 10); 3 - W. L. "Bill" Williams; 4 - Sarah S. Conner Williams (wife of Bill Williams # 3); 5 - Jackie Williams (wife of George Williams who was a brother of Bill Williams); 6 - Julia Ann Williams Malone (daughter of Bill Williams and his first wife, Bethenia Roberts Williams); 7 - Wade Malone (son of Julia # 6 and Wade Malone not in picture); 8 - Roy Williams (son of Burl Avery "Ave" Williams # 10); 9 - Ben Williams (son of Bill and Sarah S. Williams); 10 - Burl Avery "Ave" Williams (son of Bill and Bethenia Williams); 11 - Thursey Wright Williams, (second wife of Burl Avery "Ave" Williams # 10); 12 - William Henry Williams (son of Bill and Sarah Williams); 13 - Mary "Ollie" Williams Cryer (daughter of Bill and Bethenia Williams); 14 - Silas Marion Williams (son of Bill and Sarah Conner Williams); 15 - Lou Williams (son of Burl Avery "Ave" Williams # 10);

Texas on August 24, 1873. They also had five children.

Bart Williams, the first grandson of Bill Williams, described his grandfather as "not being a large man, about five feet nine inches tall, strong, but not heavily built." In his youth, Bill's hair was black and curly but, as he aged, it grayed and became thin. He was of rather dark complexion with brown eyes, and, below his hat line, his skin was burned dark brown by constant exposure to the hot Texas sun and wind, marking him as a man of the out-of-doors. He was quick of movement and his trained eyes missed nothing. His speech was clear but rapid in ordinary conver-

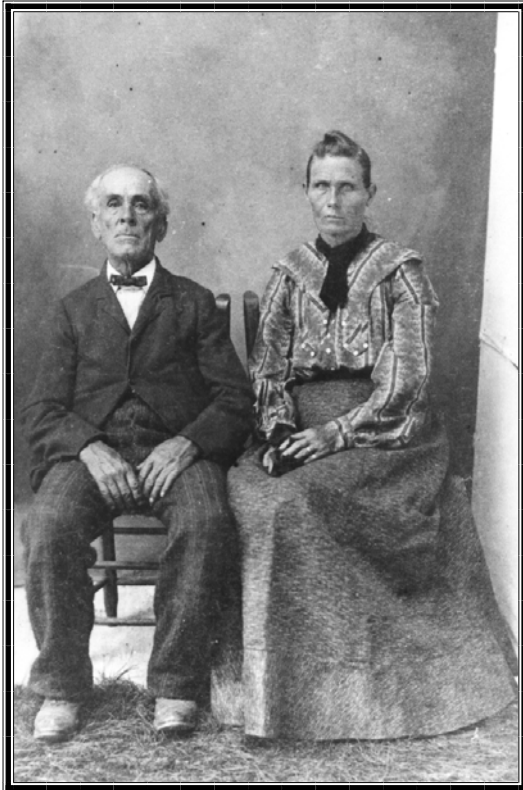
sation and he loved to tell a story but, when angry or excited, he stuttered to the point of being hard to understand. Bill believed that the element of surprise was worth a dozen men, "Always do the unexpected and don't stam-pede." He loved fancy guns and knew how to use them. From his growing up days in Tennessee, he learned how to read the woods and was an expert hunter with an uncanny ability to follow trails. He loved hound dogs and always had a handsome mount in his corral. He was not a killer just because he could kill; nor was he an Indian hater. He fought to protect life and property and he realized the Co-

manches were fighting for what they believed was rightfully theirs, their hunting grounds. He respected the courage of the Indian and said that bad white men did more damage than the red man. Bill's most sensational characteristic, as attested by many of his kinfolk and neighbors, was his outstanding courage.

*Reference was made in the above paragraph to Bill's love of fancy guns and that he knew how to use them. See photo below of his Winchester rifle which he used many times during fights with Indians.*



*Left to right: Wilford Williams and Chuck Williams, both of whom are grandsons of Bill Williams.*



*Bill and Sarah Conner Williams*

Much more of Luther Williams research on the Williams family will appear in future issues. ■

## Speech by Mook-war-ruh, a Comanche Chief -

*As reported by Noah Smithwich during peace negotiations with the Texans in 1837 and included in Luther Williams research documents.*

We have set our lodges in these groves and swung our children from these boughs from time immemorial. When the game beats away from us, we pull down our lodges and move away, leaving no trace to frighten it, and in a while the game comes back. But the white man comes and cuts down the trees, builds houses and fences, and the buffalo get frightened and leave and never come back, and the Indians are left to starve, or if we follow the game, we trespass on the hunting grounds of other tribes and war ensues. This is our land. Why should we have to leave it because of the white man? ■

## Clyde, Texas Revisited -

I have previously written about being in touch with Tommy Bentley, a descendant of Samantha Victoria McAdams Burkett who was the wife of James Henry Burkett. You may recall that James Henry had a cemetery on his land there in Clyde and that, over the years, it had become overgrown due to the lack of maintenance. Tommy had started cleaning the cemetery after learning his ancestor, Samantha Victoria Burkett, was buried there. With the aid of a Boy Scout troop, Tommy not only cleaned the fence line but also uncovered the grave markers which had become hidden over the years.

I had spoken with Tommy on the phone and made arrangements to meet him Sunday morning, September 10. When Audy and I arrived, we found we were a little early to meet with Tommy so we went by to look at the cemetery and couldn't believe the appearance compared to how it had looked the last time we were there! The fence had been cleaned and painted white and the markers were now above ground and cleaned. Tommy and the Boy Scouts had done a great job! We then drove over to a Dairy Queen there in Clyde and called Tommy. He came over immediately.

We went inside the Dairy Queen, got a drink, and sat down to look at the information Tommy had brought and to show Tommy what I had about the family which he might not have. I believe we got more from Tommy than he got from us. The very first thing we learned was that Samantha Victoria's maiden name was — are you ready for this — **Mary Augusta Samantha Victoria McAdams!**

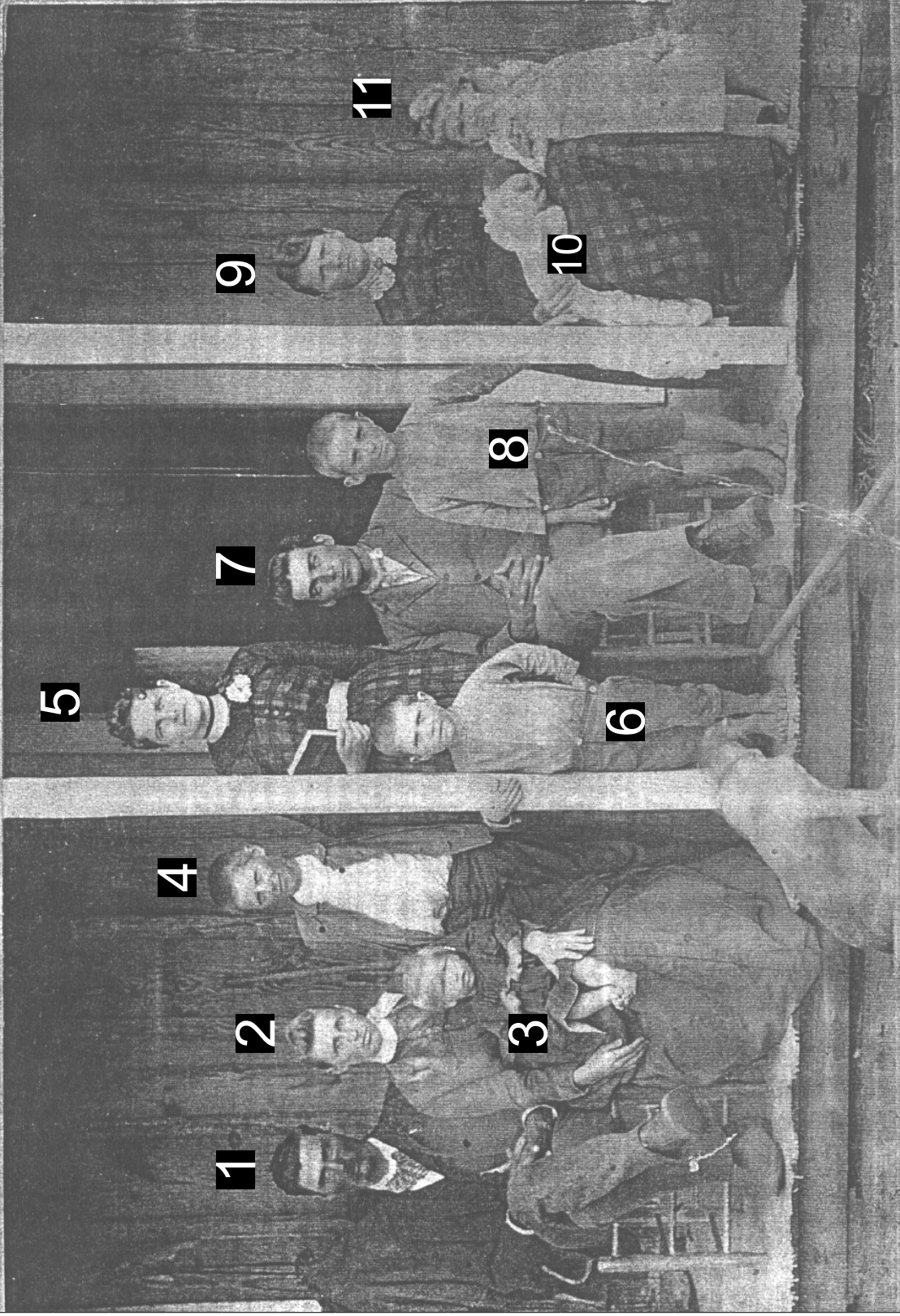
The next thing Tommy did was to produce some photo's I had never seen. Apparently, James Henry raised more than pecans. Look at those good looking blackberries in the photo on the next page! And then on the page following that, there is a young James Henry Burkett family.





*James Henry Burkett and Mary Augusta Samantha Victoria McAdams Burkett  
Date is unknown*

*The James Henry Burkett Family in 1891*



1 - Gregor Joiner - husband of Sally Nolley Joiner 2 - Sally Joiner, daughter of Samantha Victoria and first husband James Nolley 3 - Frankie Joiner, son of Gregor and Sally Joiner  
 4 - Buddy Nolley, son of Samantha Victoria and first husband James Nolley 5 - Mary Virginia Nolley, daughter of Samantha Victoria and first husband James Nolley 6 - Joe Burkett,  
 son of James Henry and Samantha Victoria Burkett 7 - James Henry Burkett 8 - Omar Burkett, son of James Henry and Samantha Victoria Burkett 9 - Mary Augusta Samantha  
 Victoria Burkett 10 - Katy Burkett, daughter of James Henry and Samantha Victoria Burkett 11 - Iru Burkett, daughter of James Henry and Samantha Victoria Burkett -





Here is a picture of what the cemetery now looks like. Notice the fence in the background. When Audy, Sid Huggins and I were there in 1997, the fence was almost hidden by the vines and weeds growing in and on it. Notice now how clean it is and that it has been repainted white. It really looks good. Tommy Bentley told us they hauled away *two (2) dump truck loads* of vines, weeds, debris, etc. So they not only cleaned the fence line, they removed enough debris to uncover the flat markers

One thing I have failed to point out, that is a petrified log standing over James Henry's grave with the attached marker from the Pecan Growers Association. All that Tommy Bentley knew about the petrified log was that James Henry had found it somewhere and wanted it placed on his grave.

Now here is the flat marker for James Henry and there is a similar one for wife Samantha.



Since Audy and I had already visited the cemetery there in Clyde, Tommy asked what we wanted to do next. I told him we wanted to go over to the Ross Cemetery in Baird to visit George Washington Burkett's grave and the cemetery in Putnam to visit Iru Burkett Jackson's grave. Tommy said no problem about Iru's grave but he had never been to the Ross cemetery in Baird — but away we went.

We exited at the Baird exit of I-20 and stopped while Tommy verified with some folks as to where the Ross cemetery was. We arrived and Audy parked his car about the middle of the cemetery and partly under a tree which gave some shade and then he and Tommy started their search leaving me at the car because of my bad knee. By now, it was mid-day and getting warm. Audy had started working toward the front of the cemetery and Tommy went to a back corner and began working back toward me. To shorten this story, after they worked a long time — enough to get hot and sweaty — and Tommy got within about 30 — 40 feet from me, he looked up and said almost with disbelief in his voice, "Oliver, he's right here!" All that work and there he was! I yelled for Audy who by now was all the way at the front of the cemetery. Below is the marker for G.W. and wife Mary. (*This George Washington Burkett was a son of Jacob Lorenza Burkett and a brother of Joseph Lafayette Burkett and James Henry Burkett*)



After making our pictures, we left for the cemetery in Putnam. We had no trouble there because, as I pointed out, Tommy had already been there and located Iru's grave. However, anybody going there for the first time would have a lot of trouble just like Tommy because the graves are in a group of trees and vines.



Iru was a daughter of James Henry and Samantha.



Below is Iru's husband, Luther Jackson. Notice that both the marker for Iru and Luther appear to be very clean which seemed to indicate to us that somebody had been taking care of them.



After taking our pictures and talking with Tommy for a few more minutes, we decided we needed to get on the road back to Huntsville, Alabama so we regretfully said goodbye to Tommy after thanking him for all of his help. Audy and I both enjoyed meeting Tommy. He was an extremely friendly and helpful person and we look forward to seeing him again. ■

### Judge Joe Burkett - (early 1934)



Joe Burkett Jr., barely 21, is believed to be the youngest judge in Texas. He defeated Kerrville's veteran justice, E. H. Turner, in a general election by a margin of 10 votes. Turner held office 34 years. Young Burkett only recently passed bar examination. (Texas News Photos.)

Joe Burkett, Jr. is a son of Joseph Washington Burkett and a grandson of James Henry Burkett. He graduated from Cumberland University Law School in Lebanon, Tennessee in 1933 and passed the Texas Bar in the Fall of 1933. Today, he continues to live in Kerrville with his wife, Pearl. ■

### - OBITUARIES -

From The Fresno Bee

(Fresno, California)

Wednesday, Sept 6, 2000



*Mrs. Alma Leona Parker*

Mrs. Parker, a longtime resident of Selma, passed away Saturday, September 2, 2000 in Kingsbury, California. She was born June 16, 1907 in a half dugout, between the forks of the Red River near Gould, Greer County, Oklahoma Territory. She was the third child of 12, and oldest daughter born to William Henry Young and Maggie Lee Rippetoe Young, early homesteaders to that area. Two years after Oklahoma became a state, Greer County split and the area where Alma was born became Harmon County, Oklahoma.

Alma grew up on the family homestead and began cooking for her large family at such a young age, that she had to stand on a box to reach the stove. On December 24, 1928, at age 21, she married Charlie Henry Parker in Hollis, Harmon County, Oklahoma. Charlie and Alma became tenant farmers there and had two children before making the move to California in 1936.

After moving to California, Charlie became involved primarily in farm labor, while Alma worked at various packing houses, canneries, etc. They had two more children, lived and worked in several locations around the San Joaquin Valley before settling in Selma, California in 1955. Alma is preceded in death by her husband, Charlie and all eleven of her brothers and sisters.

She is survived by one daughter, Wanda Baker of Selma and her three sons, Robert of Washington, Charles of Fowler and Wesley of Fresno. She leaves ten grandchildren, fourteen great-grandchildren and four great-great-grandchildren.

She was always a loving wife, mother, grandmother, and sister. She loved quilting, sewing, crocheting, knitting and especially enjoyed playing the piano and singing in church.

Graveside services will be held at Floral Memorial Park, Selma, CA, on Wednesday, September 6, 2000, at 3:00 P.M.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests remembrances be sent to Hinds Hospice, 1616 W. Shaw Ave., Suite C-1, Fresno, CA 93711.

*(Alma was a granddaughter of Martha Jane Burkett Young and William A. Young; and a great granddaughter of Henry Burkett and Mary "Polly" Epley Burkett. She was the mother of Wes Parker of Fresno, CA who has contributed much to our family history.) ■*

## Former Fire Department Captain Dies -

Former Lebanon Fire Department Captain Ronald Burkett died Wednesday, October 18, 2000 at his Lebanon home. He was 62.

A memorial service for Mr. Burkett will be at 6 p.m. Friday at Partlow Funeral Chapel in Lebanon with Garry Drennon and Bo Ford officiating. Visitation will be 2 p.m. Friday until services at the funeral chapel.

He was born July 14, 1938 in Montgomery, Alabama to the late William Wauford Burkett and Callie Dell Kirby Burkett. Burkett spent over two decades with the Lebanon Fire Department. He was retired.

He was preceded in death by brother Gary Burkett.

He is survived by wife Brenda Burkett, Lebanon; sons Mark (Patricia) Burkett, Brentwood; William "Vim" Burkett, Alburntown; daughters Rhonda Burkett, Murfreesboro and Suzanne Douglas Minert, Alaska; brother Kenneth Wayne Burkett, Lebanon; sister Betty Jo Flatt, Lebanon; grandchildren Ben and Tell Burkett, Joshua, Tyler, Wade, and Andrew Minert.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Vanderbilt University Medical Center, c/o Burn Unit, S4400 MCN, Nashville, TN 37232-2165.

Honorary pallbearers will be the Lebanon Fire Department and past and present firemen.

*(He was a grandson of Isaac Evans Burkett and Mary Belle Parker Burkett; a great grandson of Henry Isaac Burkett and Nancy Evans Burkett; and a great-great-grandson of Henry Burkett and Mary "Polly" Epley Burkett.) ■*

### Burlingame, Kansas -

**Letha Miller Burkett**, 85, Burlingame, died Monday, Sept. 25, 2000 at a Topeka hospital.

Mrs. Burkett worked at Osage Paper Products in Osage City for several years.

She was born May 15, 1915 in Burlingame, the daughter of William J. and Iola Tindell Miller. She was raised in Fostoria and attended Burlingame schools.

Mrs. Burkett was a member of the Burlingame Federated Church and the Ladies Auxiliary to the Gene and Elroy Schenck Post No. 7584 of the Veterans of Foreign Wars in Burlingame.

She married W.B. York. They were divorced. She later married Edwin E. Burkett. He preceded her in death March 23, 1989. A son, Wallace D. York, preceded her in

death in 1967.

Survivors include two sons, Edwin "Eddie" Burkett, Scranton, and Bill York, Vassar; a daughter Cheryl Kay Shatluck, Knob Noster, MO, five grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

Graveside services will be at 2 p.m. Thursday at the Burlingame Cemetery in Burlingame. Mrs. Burkett will lie in state from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Wednesday at Carey Funeral Home in Burlingame. The casket will remain closed.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Burlingame Federated Church or to the American Heart Association, and sent in care of the funeral home.

*(Mrs. Burkett's husband, Edwin E. Burkett, was a son of Samuel Walter Burkett and Martha Washington Burkett; a grandson of George Washington Burkett and Lucinda Derryberry Burkett; and a great grandson of Henry Burkett and Mary "Polly" Epley Burkett.) ■*

## Bogle Reunion Location Change -

The Bogle reunion which has been held in the past at the Bank in Woodbury, TN on the 2nd Saturday in October will now be held on the same date but at the cemetery and Church of Christ on Sugar Tree Knob, TN. Those attending are encouraged to bring sandwiches and lawn chairs. In case of rain, the reunion will be cancelled. ■

## The Historian's Corner -

- Oliver Webb



I have done it again! Too much information and too many photo's to get it all in this issue. In the last issue I promised to have an article about our George Washington Burkett who moved to Burlingame, Kansas but I have run out of room to do it justice so rather than do a small article I have decided to wait and do it right in the next issue.

I offer my apologies to Mrs. Arlene Ramskill of Attica, Ohio and Mrs. Arlene Peters of Topeka, Kansas both of whom have provided information and/or photo's. However, on the bright side, I have now been in touch with Eddie Burkett of Scranton, Kansas who will be providing additional information about the George Washington Burkett family. Eddie is a great grandson of George Washington.

*Happy Holidays to All!*